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## Welcome to Trainee Life 101

by Lori Collins

I will provide you with basic information about my experiences as a Centralized Financial Management Trainee Program (CFMTP) member during the period of June 1999 to June 2001. I will describe my experiences at major milestones in the trainee program and offer my advice to new trainees into CFMTP.

When I arrived at the Naval Transportation Support Center (NTC) in Norfolk, Virginia on June 21, 1999, I did not know what to expect. I was entering a command that I had never heard of until I received a letter from the CFMTP. This letter provided information about my homeport. Although I did not know what to expect, I was excited because I knew that I had been given the opportunity of a lifetime. I was going to receive formal training to become a Budget Analyst for the Department of Navy (DoN).

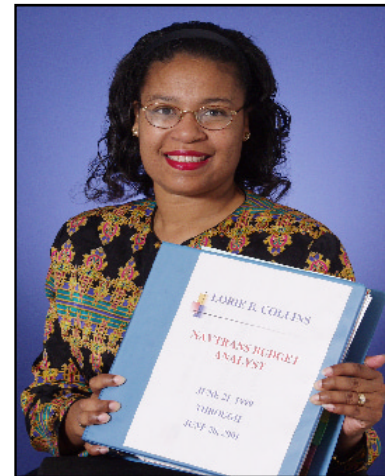
### THE INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (IDP)

One of my most important milestones in the trainee program was the completion of my Individual Development Plan (IDP). For a new trainee, the IDP is your professional development tool for the next two years. It is important that a trainee incorporate meaningful rotational work assignments and training courses into the IDP. A trainee should talk to former trainees and ask them about their rotational work assignments. Former trainees can provide leads on interesting assignments and training programs. A trainee should ask his/her Personnel Department and fellow employees about training sources, catalogs, and Websites. The IDP is crucial to a trainee's development as a financial professional so be sure and take an active part in its development.

### THE NOTEBOOK

Keep a 3-ring binder with all of your important documents inside. I established what became known as "Lorie's Work Bible." This binder contains all of my paperwork from day one as a trainee. Inside the binder you will find:

1. Recruitment Information (application for employment, transcripts, and selection letter)
2. Acceptance Letter (checklists, employment forms, and packets)
3. Individual Development Plan (IDP)
4. Personnel Actions
5. Performance Appraisals
6. Performance Review Checklists
7. Timekeeping Paperwork (time sheets, leave slips)
8. Training Requests, Certificates, Confirmations, and similar documents
9. Travel Requests, Orders, Claims, and Travel Voucher Summaries



10. Any Other Important Information (for example: letters of appreciation, awards, ASMC certificate, and similar documents)

### ROTATIONAL WORK ASSIGNMENTS

I learned something from each of my rotational assignments. I met new people and was able to establish a "who to go to" list. Sometimes I was given a small amount of work to do and sometimes the amount of work I was given seemed overwhelming. No matter what amount of work it was, I made the best of the situation. If there was little work to do, I would use that opportunity to go on the command's Website and learn more about the command, its mission, and its strategic goals. I would go to the NAVWEB/SECNAV Website, click on different topics and hyperlinks to learn more about the financial management world. My advice to a new trainee is: "Take the slow times to read and broaden your knowledge base and do not be afraid to ask questions."

### TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

As a trainee, I was able to attend the "Enhanced Defense Financial Management Course (EDFMC)" along with several other financial management-related courses. These courses provided a great foundation for studying to take the examination to become a Certified Defense Financial Manager (CDFM). I was able to take the exam and successfully pass all three modules to become a CDFM. My certificate proudly hangs in my cubicle. Take advantage of every training opportunity available to you. When it comes to training, if you have an open mind, you can always learn something.

### ATTITUDE

I believe the key to your success will be closely tied to your attitude. Maintain a positive attitude. Even when you are given simple things to do like copying or filing, make

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the most of the opportunity. Read over the material you are copying or filing; you may learn something! Do not join the “grumble band.” There will be complainers everywhere you go; do not become one of them. Instead, choose to be positive and focus on your goal – TO LEARN. If you have a problem, gather your thoughts and respectfully request a time to discuss your issues. Always be calm and organized, your meeting or telephone call will go much better. Do not forget, the CFMTP staff are vital sources of information and assistance. They will be more than happy to assist you.

**SUCCESS**

I came into the trainee program with 13 years of previous government service; however, my 2 years as a Budget Analyst trainee were the best. I had the opportunity to learn, travel,

and meet new people. Every step of the way was not smooth, but the good definitely outweighed the bad. I am now a confident Budget Analyst who may not know everything there is to know about financial management today, but I do know that the trainee program has given me a concrete foundation on which to build and to continue to grow.

The best advice I can give a new trainee is: “Stay positive, learn all you can, and strive to turn every stumbling block into a stepping stone.” If you keep a positive attitude, you will not only survive, but you will succeed. I look forward to hearing about your success! ♦

